

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-12

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY KABUL

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T STATE 251514

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, AF, UR

SUBJ: SOVIET TANKS IN AFGHANISTAN

SUMMARY: PROPOSED APPROACH TO INDIANS ON
REPORTED SOVIET TANK SHIPMENTS TO AFGHANISTAN. END
SUMMARY.

1. AS YOU AWARE, WE REMAIN CONCERNED ABOUT STRAINED
PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS AND POTENTIAL FOR REGIONAL DESTABI-
LIZATION THAT FURTHER DETERIORATION COULD CAUSE. ON BASIS
OF WHAT SWARAN SINGH TOLD YOU AND LINE AMBASSADOR KAUL
HAS TAKEN IN DISCUSSIONS HERE, INDIANS APPEAR HAVE MORE
RELAXED VIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS, STRESSING THAT DAOUD REGIME*SEEKS TO MPHASIZE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS AND
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IS UNINTERESTED IN STIRRING UP TROUBLE*WITH PAKISTAN.
INDIANS ALSO CLAIM THAT GOA*POSITION ON PUSHTUNISTAN

RE* ESENTS NO*SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE FROM THAT OF ZAHIR GOVERNMENT. AT SAME TIME, INDIANS SAY THEY URGING CONTINUED MODERATION ON AFGHANS AND REPORT THAT SOVIETS HAVE SIMILAR STANCE.

2. IN CONTEXT OUR CONTINUING EXCHANGES OVER AFGHAN SITUATION, WE HAVE IN MIND DELHI DISCUSSING WITH GOI TROUBLING--BUT UNCONFIRMED--INTELLIGENCE WE HAVE RECEIVED OF LARGE-SCALE SOVIET TANK SHIPMENTS TO AFGHANISTAN. ALTHOUGH WE CURRENTLY BELIEVE THAT REPORTS OF OVER 800

TANKS (INCLUDING MANY NEW T-62'S) ENTERING AFGHANISTAN ARE EXAGGERATED, ANY MAJOR UPGRADING OF AFGHAN ARMOR CAPABILITIES COULD HAVE DESTABILIZING EFFECT ON SOUTH ASIA PICTURE. EVEN ADDITION OF TWO-THREE HUNDRED NEW TANKS TO EXISTING AFGHAN INVENTORY (WHICH WE CURRENTLY ESTIMATE AS CONSISTING OF 200 T-34'S, 361 T-54/55'S AND 10 T-62'S) COULD, IN OUR VIEW, AGGRAVATE PAK APPREHENSIONS ABOUT SOVIET INTENTIONS AS WELL AS THOSE OF KABUL REGIME. RESULT COULD BE FURTHER ESCALATION OF PUSHTUNISTAN DISPUTE AND HEIGHTEN DANGERS OF ARMED CLASHES BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN. FYI: WE ASSUME INDIANS NEED NOT BE REMINDED OF ADDED PRESSURES ON US BY GOP FOR CHANGES IN US MILITARY SUPPLY POLICY THAT COULD RESULT FROM ANY MAJOR SOVIET RESUPPLY IN AFGHANISTAN.

4. FYI: WE ASSUME THAT GOI WILL ADVISE SOVIETS AND AFGHANS OF OUR APPROACH AND IN FACT THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THEM TO BECOME AWARE OF USG CONCERNS EVEN IF REPORT PROVES FALSE ALARM. IN ANY EVENT, THIS IS SORT OF PROBLEM WE AND INDIANS SHOULD BE ABLE DISCUSS IN PRIVATE AS WE CONTINUE WORK TOWARD MORE MATURE RELATIONSHIP. END FYI.

5. REQUEST YOUR VIEWS. KISSINGGR

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